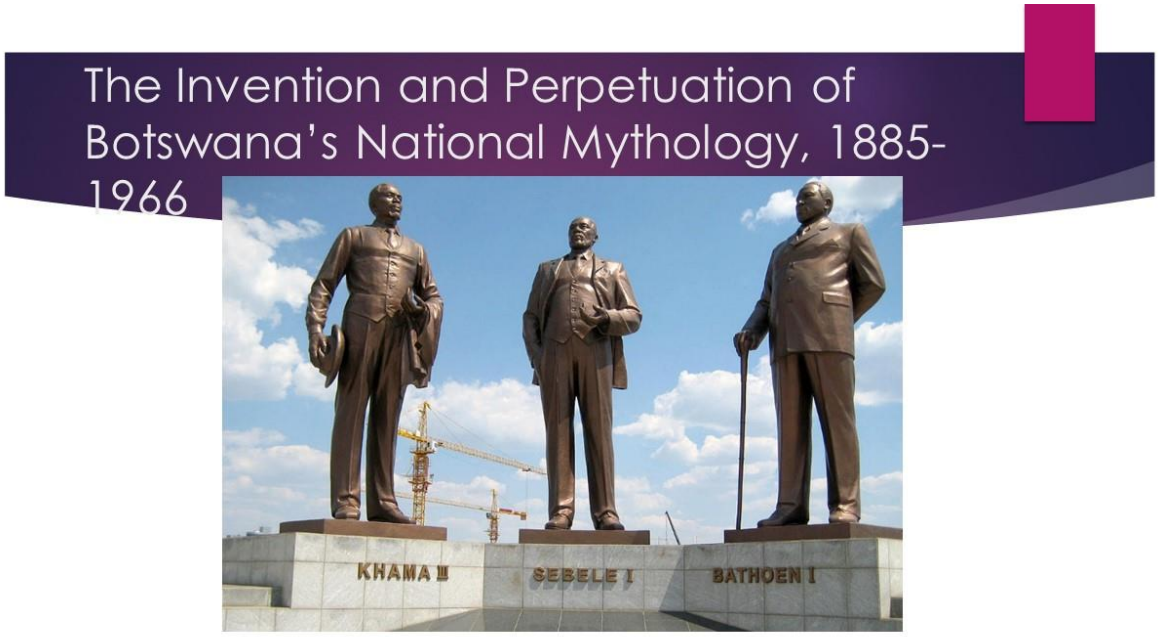

The Invention and Perpetuation of Botswana's National Mythology, 1885-1966

by Barry Morton and Jeff Ramsay

Nationalism, it has been noted many times, relies heavily on constructed histories, signs, narratives, and identities.[1] As Schlesinger has noted, "the invocation of history is indispensable to nations and groups in the process of making themselves."[2] Within Africa itself, the situation is probably little different. Afrikaner Nationalism, for instance, has been the subject of several studies that demonstrated exactly how intellectuals associated with the National Party constructed the notion of the Afrikaners as a "chosen people" with the God-given right to create the system of apartheid in South Africa.[3] One could also point to scholarship on Zimbabwe as a case where peasant consciousness and traditional religion shaped the ideology of the nationalist movement.[4]

Nationalism in Botswana has been a highly successful unifying ideology since its emergence in the late 1950s. Since then, people identifying as "Batswana" have to a great extent abandoned their former ethnic and localized identities. Such factors as identification with the South African liberation

[1] Some now classic scholarship in this vein is B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd Ed. (London: Verso, 1991); H. Bhaba, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); and E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Vantage, 1987), Ch. 6.
[2] A. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Dis-Uniting of America: Reflections on a Multi-Cultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1992), 48.
[3] E.g. A. Du Toit, "No Chosen People: The Myth of Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology," *American Historical Review* 88, 4 (1983): 920-52; and L. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
[4] E.g. see T. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985).

movements, and a national schooling system using Setswana as a national language have been the key factors involved in this shift of identity.[5] Insofar as the popular use of history has contributed to the growth of nationalist identity, this paper argues that two linked narratives lay at the heart of modern Tswana consciousness. These two combined narratives, which will be referred to below as the "national mythology", are ubiquitous and can be recited in some version by the entire population. Because both parts of the national mythology involve inter-ethnic collaboration and consensus, they continue to resonate strongly with the citizens of the modern nation-state.

In assessing the construction and perpetuation of Botswana's national mythology, the most striking aspect of the process is that they originated with fabrications made by the British colonizers during the "Scramble for Africa" in order to mask their predatory actions. Over the course of time, the peoples who came to be known as "Batswana" took these prevarications and turned them against their colonizers in the course of various political disputes. Batswana identity today—insofar as this identity is derived from notions of history—is based on the belief that they asked their colonizers to both colonize and protect them. Batswana thus internalize an extremely passive, supplicant historical role—the complete opposite of what one would expect in the case of one of Africa's wealthiest democracies. As a result, historical resistance figures who opposed colonization and conquest have been forgotten, while "collaborators" have been enshrined as founding figures of the nation. Such a situation is not, though, evidence of the success of a Gramsci-type ideological hegemony. Rather, the construction of Botswana's national mythology supports Trouillot's arguments from his monograph *Silencing The Past*—that narratives that are alive in popular memory are created in a process contested by both the structures of power and by their subjects. As the process unfolds, the outcome is never a simple victory for the government or the elite, because even the weakest groups have the ability to interpret their own history: "their subjectivity is an integral part of the event and of any satisfactory description of the event."[6]

The Two Guarantees of Protection

Essentially, Botswana's national mythology involves two separate (if sometimes conflated) incidents in which Batswana of varying backgrounds begged the British for "protection". The first narrative involves a supplicant role in 1885 during the "Scramble", while the second narrative revolves around Queen Victoria's "guarantee" of protection to the delegation of Three Chiefs who went to see her in London in 1895.

The first part of the narrative maintains that the Batswana invited the British to take over their territories in 1885 in order to "protect" them from the Boers of the Transvaal Republic.

Your servants humbly showeth unto your Honour, that they became British subjects not through conquest, of wars waged against the Imperial Government, but that by choice they asked the late

[5] See W. Edge, ed., *The Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho* (Gaborone: Lebopo, 1996): B. Morton and J. Ramsay, *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground* (Gaborone: Pula Press, 1999); T. Janson and J. Tsonope, *The Making of a National Language: The History of Setswana* (Gaborone: Heinemann Botswana, 1991).
[6] R. M. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 24.

noble Queen Victoria to protect them from the forces of the SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC, who were continually threatening to molest them.[7]

In the last quarter of the century trouble began to break out between the Batswana and the Boers across the border in the Transvaal. The Batswana appealed to Britain for protection.[8]

In the late 19th century, hostilities broke out between the Batswana and Boer settlers from the Transvaal. After appeals by the Batswana for assistance, the British Government in 1885 put "Bechuanaland" under its protection.[9]

Part two of the narrative maintains that in 1895 Queen Victoria ("Mmamosadinyana") personally guaranteed the continued "protection" of the Botswana, an event that occurred when the visiting delegation of Bathoen I of the Bangwaketse, Sebele I of the Bakwena, and Khama III of the Bangwato had an audience with her at Windsor Castle. This guarantee was made in the context of plans to hand over the Protectorate to Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company (BSAC):

You will have been informed doubtless of the visit to England of certain of the Protectorate Chiefs during the reign of your illustrious ancestress, HER MAJESTY, the late Queen Victoria, whose memory still lives with us ,and when promises and pledges were given to the Chiefs, whereby they and other protectorate Chiefs have ever since been bound more indissolubly than ever in the loyalty to the throne of your fathers.[10]

Our fathers were filled with a faith that can only be described as wonderful and confidence in, and respect for British justice and fair play crossed the seas to implore the protection of the Government of the Great Queen. It was mere faith that made them do what they did, but we, their children can now judge their actions. . . We pray that Our Mother stretch her protecting wings all the closer about us and keep us warm, confident, happy and helpful of growing….[11]

Local theatre legends also presented Botswana's long journey from a British protectorate to an independent country…. The theatre group showed the three *dikgosi* who went to Britain to ask for protection against the Boers and John Cecil Rhodes who was constructing a railway line from Cape to Cairo. Their mission in Britain was a success as Queen Victoria acceded to their request after a long debate among the Queen's counsel members.[12]

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[7] Botswana National Archives (hereafter BNA) S. 17/1 fo. 63, Address of Acting Chief Paul Montsioa to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs [1929].
[8] "Bechuanaland Fact Sheet," *Kutlwano* 5, 5 (1966): insert.
[9] "Botswana History," Botswana Embassy, Washington, D.C.http://www.botswanaembassy.org/page/history-of-botswana. Accessed June 28 2015.

[10] BNA S. 42/2 Address by Isang to the Prince of Wales, June 1925.
[11] BNA S. 535/12/3 fo. 30 Address by unnamed group of "Bamangwato" to Patrick Gordon-Walker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, [January 1951].
[12] "Batswana Look Beyond 2016," *Botswana Daily News* 2 March 2015.

The Origins of Myth 1—Asking For Protection in 1885

The idea that Britain established the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 at the request of the Tswana chiefs for "protection" originated from British government officials as a cover story for their annexation. The story sought not only to achieve a British takeover of Tswana territory with a minimum of military force, but also to perpetuate it afterwards with a classic Gramscian lie that masked the true nature of events. Nor was it even the first time to use this particular, tactic. In 1868, when the Cape Colony annexed Basotholand following various hostilities between the Basotho and the Boers of the Orange Free State, it allegedly did so because King Moshoeshoe "appealed to be taken under the authority of the Queen."[13]

Great Britain's desire to annex the Bechuanaland Protectorate was made during negotiations with Germany during the Berlin Conference. Although the areas of modern-day Botswana were not initially on the table, British officials grew increasingly anxious regarding German intentions once a German presence was established in Namibia in 1884. In December of that year British intelligence indicated that the German takeover of lands east of Namibia was imminent. This intelligence reached Downing St. quickly and was acted upon.

I have been confidentially told that the ultimate aim of the German Government is to possess a belt of country stretching from the coast to Zanzibar, so as to cut off our Colonies from the interior. Ministers consider this information to be so important as to justify them in again urging upon Her Majesty's Imperial Government the necessity for preserving, in the interests of the Empire, outlets for British trade northward of Bechuanaland to the Zambesi. Any such course as that which it is apprehended will be taken by the German Government would seriously affect the expansion of British trade in South and South-Central Africa.[14]

Or, as the Colonial Secretary understood the matter: "the extended protection up to Shoshong. It was adopted mainly in view of the fear of the Germans."[15] On the 27th of January 1885 an Order-In-Council placed the Kalahari south of the 22nd parallel under British control, and this declaration was made public in March when it was announced at the Berlin Conference.[16] In order to make these declarations a physical reality, a 5,000 man force led by General Charles Warren was assembled to occupy the territory, while the veteran London Missionary Society preacher John Mackenzie was attached to the military column to lead negotiations with the Tswana chiefs.

Warren and Mackenzie's discussions on the eve of their invasion of the new Protectorate led them to come up with the big lie that they had been invited in. There they debated "the course which should be taken to bring this step on the part of Her Majesty's Government to the notice of the chiefs whose

[13] Union of South Africa GP S.32791-1952-3-500 Negotiations Regarding the Union of South Africa of the Government of Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland, 5.

[14] Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO) Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 879/24/305 Encl in No 43, Thomas Upington, Confidential Minute, December 30 1884.

[15] Colonial Office Minute by Lord Fairfield in London, 2 May 1885, repr in A. Dachs, ed., *The Papers of John Mackenzie* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1975), 194.

[16] PRO CO 870/22/292 Earl of Derby to Hercules Robinson 14 March 1885.

countries and people were affected by the announcement."[17] Warren was opposed to a naked exercise of power, preferring the option of convincing the Tswana Chiefs to sign treaties, and in this way to achieve "submission without bloodshed"[18] As a result he began to leak information to members of his expedition who were moonlighting as newspaper correspondents, and conflicting reports began to appear in South African newspapers regarding a numerous Tswana chiefs who had requested British "protection" from Boer aggression.[19] By the time that Warren's expedition arrived in the new Protectorate, the Batswana leaders were already aware from these published reports that their sovereignty had been lost—apparently at their own request. Hence Warren's discussion with Sebele I of the Bakwena.

(Sebele.) Why is our country to be taken from us?
(General.) What does Sechele understand by his country being taken under protection?
(Sebele, the chief's eldest son.) I say it has been *taken*, because we have never been asked.
(General.) I read out a Protectorate had been established.
(Sebele.) What are we protected from? What is the matter?
(General.) Do you think you require no protection?
(Sebele.) What do you mean by protection?
(General.) Protection may mean protecting from outside, and at the same time guarding you from inside…. Is there, then, nothing you want guarding against?
(Sebele.) It may be known to you, Sir; we don't know it…..
(General.) Does he [Sechele] wish me to tell the Queen he wants no protection; he can protect himself?
(Sebele.) He does not want any protection; he only wants friendship."[20]

This exchange alone clearly demonstrates that Batswana had not asked Britain for protection versus the Transvaal Boers. As the famed Tswana leader Tshekedi Khama later noted, "when the protection was brought to us, we did not know what this protection meant…."[21] The British assertion, meanwhile, that the Tswana were in danger from aggression emanating from the Transvaal Republic simply did not hold water. Although a war had been fought between a Tswana coalition and the Transvaal Republic between 1852-3, the resulting standoff led to a permanent border being established as well as cordial relations between the two sides. From the time of Sechele's 1856 visit to Pretoria and the establishment of the Protectorate in 1885 there are no recorded incidents of violence or antagonism between the Transvaal Boers and any Batswana living north of the Molopo River. Meanwhile, there was considerable

[17] J. Mackenzie, *Austral Africa: Using it or Losing It* (???), II, 230.
[18] Ibid, II, 230, 267.
[19] See *Natal Mercury* 2 April 1885 and various reports in *Natal Witness* from February-April 1885. These and other newspaper sources are discussed in J. Ramsay, "The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South-central Botswana 1820-1940" (Ph.D Dissertation, Botston University, 1991), 171-2.
[20] PRO CO 879/24/317 Encl in No. 5 "Diamond Fields Times, Tues May 12. "Sir Charles Warren at Sechele's." [April 27 1885].
[21] *Tour of His Excellency the High Commissioner for South Africa, Sir Herbert Stanley CGMG, in the Bechuanaland Protectorate 17th-31st August 1931* (Mafeking: Government Printer, 1931), 32.

diplomacy, trade, hunting, and migration between the two sides. Any suggestion that there was a state of hostility between the Batswana and the Transvaal Republic after 1856 is simply false.[22]

During May 1885 three of the Tswana chiefs, Khama III of the Bangwato, Bathoen I of the Bangwaketse, and Sechele I of the Bakwena, were cajoled or induced to sign treaties with the English by Warren and Mackenzie. Of the three, Khama was the most accommodating, while Bathoen and Sechele were less than enthusiastic. No exact laws or binding agreements were negotiated since the British wished to "confine ourselves to preventing that part of the Protectorate being occupied… by Foreign powers."[23] As a result, the British government's goals were achieved:

The Bechuanaland Protectorate was destined to confer a richer benefit upon Her Majesty's Government in South Africa than that Government had planned for in first assuming it. Gradually the light of reality dawned on reluctant minds; and what was undertaken professedly on behalf of two native allies turned out to be indispensable to the continued supremacy of England in South Africa.[24]

On September 30th the situation was cemented when the Batswana south of the Molopo River were placed under the control of the Cape Colony, while the Bechuanaland Protectorate incorporated the areas inhabited by the Bangwaketse, Bakwena, Bangwato and other chiefdoms further north.

Queen Victoria's Meeting With the Three Chiefs 1895 and the origins of Myth 2

British policy toward the Bechuanaland Protectorate changed very soon after its initial annexation. The Gladstone government that had taken over the area was soon out of office, and the successor administrations had no plan for it. The Protectorate, according to those who inherited it, was "in its very essence a temporary make-shift intended to fill the gap between barbarism and direct annexation to the British Empire."[25] A minimum level of authority was established, and life went on much as before until Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company received its charter in 1890. From this point onwards, the British government was obligated to hand the Protectorate over to Rhodes, since the very first clause of the company's charter (signed by Queen Victoria herself) expressly included the Bechuanaland Protectorate in it.[26]

During the next five years the Protectorate was prepared for its transition towards Chartered rule. Most senior officials in the Protectorate were corrupted by Rhodes, and the area was used as a staging ground for the conquest of Zimbabwe.[27] Several Chiefs sought to stymie Rhodes's actions by granting concessions to rival syndicates, while Rhodes's men in turn used a variety of underhanded tactics to undermine his Tswana opponents. Resident Commissioner Sir Sidney Shippard, meanwhile, crafted

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[22] See Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 113-6, and "The 1852-3 Batswana-Boer War: How the Batswana Achieved Victory," *Botswana Notes & Records* 23 (1991): 193-208. It is true that "freebooters" and "filibusters" established the two short-lived republics, Stellaland and Goshen, in the area of the modern-day Northern Cape, in the early 1880s, on land seized from the southern Tswana. None of this activity had much to do with the peoples of modern-day Botswana. These filibusters in any case took far less land and killed far fewer people than the British colonial forces that seized Griqualand following the diamond discoveries.

[23] British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP) C. 4588, Stanley to Robinson, 13 August 1885.

[24] Mackenzie, *Austral Africa*, II, 209.

[25] *African Review*, 12 October 1895.

[26] "Charter of the British South Africa Company," *Pall Mall Gazette* December 20 1889.

[27] See P. Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana and the British: Colonialism, Collaboration and Conflict in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1885-1899* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980).

plans for the wholesale alienation of Tswana land.[28] His underlings mapped out a host of tiny reserves and reserving ninety percent of the country for White occupancy. By early 1895 it became clear to the world that the transfer of the Protectorate to Rhodes was imminent. Given the vague nature of the treaties signed with the British earlier, the Tswana chiefs had no means to oppose becoming Rhodes's subjects—a prospect they viewed with trepidation.[29] The only means at their disposal to overcome the situation was to appeal to public opinion in the United Kingdom, and this they did. To do so, they decided to use Warren and Mackenzie's promises of "protection" to their own political advantage.

The journey of Bathoen, Khama, and Sebele to England to protest their transfer into Rhodes's empire has assumed mythical proportions in Botswana's historical consciousness. To all extent and purposes, the Three Chief's Monument in downtown Gaborone today is ***the*** national monument. Parsons's monograph has described the journey in detail, and makes clear that the Tswana leaders captured the public's attention in England, appearing before large crowds at appearances arranged by their LMS hosts. Khama III, who had banned alcohol and had established a Christian state on his territory, in particular had wide support from temperance and evangelical voters.[30] Additionally, Khama's considerable assistance to Rhodes in the conquest of Matabeleland—in supplies, in troops, and in allowing his territory to be used as a staging ground—meant that he was popular with pro-imperialist sentiment. He had "earned the gratitude of all Englishmen who are interested in the expansion of South Africa," and was also "the one man in Africa who case commands the sympathy of a large section of the British public."[31] As a result of the popularity of the visit, the Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain agreed to make some concessions to the chiefs regarding the integrity of their territories, and the potential of land losses was mitigated.[32]

Following this seeming victory in their negotiations with Chamberlain, the Chiefs ventured to Windsor Castle in November for an audience with Queen Victoria. Once there "they were introduced to the Queen's presence by the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain, M.P. (Secretary of State for the Colonies) to express their feelings of loyalty and the desire to remain under Her Majesty's rule to which the Queen made a gracious reply."[33] The Queen, for her part, was unwilling to get involved in a difficult political matter, and told the Chief's they should obey their colonial masters' wishes:

I am pleased that the chiefs have had the opportunity of coming to see me here. My minister has told me of their unswerving loyalty. I approve of the decision of my Ministers that the sale of strong drink shall be prohibited in your country and that those who attempt to deal in it or supply it to the natives shall be severely punished. Chiefs, your duty is to obey my laws and respect the officers who are put

[28] See Colonial Office Confidential Print (hereafter COCP) 879 No. 498 Chamberlain to Robinson 14 November 1895 and 30 December 1895; Colonial Office to Goold-Adams, 15 November 1895; BNA HC 196/1 Robinson to Newton, 17 December 1895.
[29] Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe and the Great White Queeen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52-62.
[30] Ibid.
[31] See *African Review*, September 7 1895.
[32] Parsons, *King Khama*, 87-90, 201-11; J. Mockford, *Seretse Khama and the Bamangwato* (London: Staples Press, 1950), 123-7. The British government essentially decided to wait until Khama's death until reducing the size of the reserves.
[33] *Cape Argus Home Edition*, 23 November 1895.

among you as my representatives. I thank you very much for your beautiful gifts, and I wish you and your people prosperity.[34]

Following this speech, gifts were exchanged between the two parties. Due to the later importance of the items involved it is worth quoting in full:

The chiefs then presented their offerings of skins of leopards, etc, which they had brought from South Africa. Her majesty was graciously pleased to accept these presents, and gave to each of the chiefs a Bible in the Sechwana language, a large portrait of herself, and an Indian shawl for each of the chief's wives.[35]

The meeting was thus routine and insignificant—very much the stock audience the Queen gave visiting potentates from the Empire, with the short speeches, the gift of Bibles, and the hasty exit. Nothing had actually happened, and no promises of any sort were made.

When the Chiefs returned to the Protectorate they were met by massive crowds, consisting of Batswana from across the Protectorate.[36] There can be no doubt that contemporary Batswana viewed the mission to England as one of critical importance, and few events during the rest of the colonial era engendered such a national response. The message of the Chiefs to these crowds, though, did not make any mention of promises by the Queen.

Our dikgosi had visited the Europeans; they also went to see the Queen, and they saw her and talked with her…. The names of the dikgosi are Sebele, Khama and Bathoen. We were without them for five months…. They say that the nation of the Queen received them well, including the Queen and Parliament…. We have hope that God has heard these prayers and he will accordingly save us. Let it be like that.

Within two weeks of the Chief's return home in late December they unwittingly achieved victory. The failure of Rhodes's mercenaries to foment a coup in the Transvaal Republic during the Jameson Raid soon after New Year meant that Rhodes was permanently disgraced and lost his influence with the British government.[37] The Colonial Office reversed its plans to hand over the Protectorate to the BSAC, as were the plans to alienate Tswana lands to White settlement. The idea that the Queen had personally guaranteed continued British imperial rule, though, was soon to emerge. The claim was first made within months by Khama's right-hand man.

But we are not worried. Will the word that has been said by the great Queen and her person, Mr. Chamberlain, change? I say, no, it will not change, because the Great Majesty, the Queen, has told her Secretary in London that the land has been judged to be ours. There is no one who will enter in the

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[34] Mockford, *Seretse Khama*, 128.
[35] *Cape Argus Home Edition*, 23 November 1895.
[36] For a long description of the Chief's return see R. Motswetla, "The Arrival of the Tswana Chiefs," 15 January 1896, in Volz and Mgadla, eds, *Words of Batswana: Letters to Mahoko a Becwana, 1883-1896* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2006), 261.
[37] K. Shillington, *An African Adventure: A Brief Life of Cecil Rhodes* (Bishop's Stortford, UK: Rhodes Memorial Museum, 1993), 47-50.

controversial way that they want to. Let God wait upon the words that have been spoken by the dikgosi Khama, Bathoen and Sebele in front of the Queen and Mr. Chamberlain.[38]

The sudden collapse of Rhodes's plans, then, gave the Batswana a reprieve. Both elements of what would become the national mythology were known in 1895, but would not be mentioned again until they were resurrected some fourteen years later.

Using the Myths: The Incorporation Issue, 1909-10

If the Batswana had won a pyrrhic victory over the BSAC following the Jameson Raid, it took a number of years before they began to claim victory as a result of the 1895 visit to England. The impetus for the development of the Tswana national mythology lay in the political tactics of its leaders after the South African War. In the early years of the century, following the defeat of the Boer republics, Lord Milner and the British government decided to unify South Africa for the first time, while also amalgamating the four South African provinces, Natal, Transvaal, Cape Colony, and Orange Free State, with the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Basutoland, and Swaziland.

The prospect of being incorporated into the new, unified South African state horrified practically all Batswana within the Bechuanaland Protectorate. In large measure this was due to the British betrayal of their African allies during the South African War, following which Africans were denied the vote by Milner. The years when Milner and the British government controlled South Africa, 1902-10, were the ones in which racial segregation was imposed for the first time in South Africa, and the British ideal of non-racial democracy, formerly enshrined in the Cape Colony, was now abandoned. Instead, the defeated Boers were given all their land back by the British, and Boer demands for an all-white franchise were accepted as the basis for a unified South African dominion. In addition, white South Africans were engaging in open discussions about "the native question" in great detail amongst themselves, and ended up restricting black land ownership in 1913.[39]

As a result of not wanting to be incorporated as part of this new and hostile Union, leading Batswana *dikgosi* within the Bechuanaland Protectorate sought to join other Africans in South Africa who opposed the passing of the South Africa Act by the British Parliament in 1910, an act which would enshrine the policies promoted by Milner. This led to their involvement with the Coloured and Native Peoples' Delegation, a South African coalition opposed to the new and evolving racial order in South Africa.

The Delegation sent a large number of delegates to England in late 1909 to lobby politicians and educate the public, a delegation that was ultimately unsuccessful. The Batswana chiefs did not go to England this time themselves, but Bathoen I of the Bangwaketse instead had a South African negrophile, Joseph Gerrans, go to England to represent him. Of all the member of the delegation, Gerrans would prove to be the most successful.

[38] R. Motswetla, "Khama and His Government," 8 March 1896, in Volz and Mgadla, eds, *Words of Batswana*, 261.
[39] L. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa: 1902-1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

Bathoen, who had of course some name recognition in Britain due to his visit in 1895, had Gerrans place in *The Times* a long story in which speeches made by himself and Sebele to the South African High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, were reprinted. In these speeches, both *digkosi* raise their objections to incorporation based upon their alleged bond with Queen Victoria and the British people. The theme most heavily played on by Bathoen was the seeming betrayal by the British benefactors of their Batswana protegés, who had so innocently come to them asking for protection before:

I am under the King--King Edward....We are thankful for the protection we enjoy today. To be handed over--no....When a man is born under one Government how can he be happy under another? If we go, we go simply as a result of compulsion; but our hearts will be left behind.[40]

Bathoen played up the seemingly "indissoluble" bond that existed between the Batswana and Queen Victoria, as a result of their 1895 visit. Referring to gifts that the Queen had allegedly given them at Windsor Palace, he noted:

A ring is the sign of an indissoluble bond. This ring was given to me by the late Queen Victoria . . .as a proof that the promises made me would never be broken and that the Bangwaketsi would for ever remain under the protection of her majesty.... it is a token that what had been agreed upon should not be upset. Is that not what a ring signifies marriage?[41]

Holding his ring aloft, Bathoen then called for Sebele to raise his as well, "which the latter immediately did by raising his hand, on which all could see a similar ring."[42] Bathoen's appeal through the British press, limited as it was to a single newspaper article, albeit reprinted by many other local newspapers in Britain, proved remarkably successful. *The Times*, for instance, noted that "the speeches of these barbarian chiefs, even as reported in English, are far better reading than the speeches of most European statesmen."[43] Ordinary citizens, although in numbers that are difficult to gauge, lobbied their MPs to oppose any move to incorporate the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and during the debates over the South Africa Act a solid block of MPs opposed any hint of a motion for incorporation. The matter was simply put off, for reasons that are not yet understood.[44] So while black South Africans lost their rights with the arrival of the Union, Batswana retained their rights to own land within their own country, and also to maintain whatever leverage they could politically under the auspices of indirect rule.

The Continuation of the Anti-Incorporation Rhetoric, 1911-60

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[40]*The Times* (London) July 24 1909.
[41]Ibid.
[42]BNA S. 39/7 Acting Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, January 12th 1909. The ARC believed that the rings were in fact given to the Chiefs by Chamberlain, not the Queen, which is probably true, since the rings were not mentioned in press accounts of the 1895 visit. See above.
[43]*The Times* July 28 1909.
[44]The question of why the Bechuanaland Protectorate was excluded from the Union is not clear. For instance, it is ignored in L. Thompson's tome, *The Unification of South Africa*. Parsons' short investigation into the matter is probably near the truth, maintaining that residual BSAC mining rights across the Protectorate, combined with Khama III's status in Britain, were the critical factors. See Q.N. Parsons, "Khama III, the Bamangwato and the British, with special reference to 1895 to 1923," (Ph.D diss, Edinburgh University, 1973), 306-11.

Bathoen's ability to turn the rhetoric of protection back against the British set the tone for another fifty years of public discourse in the Protectorate. For another half century Batswana leaders adopted some variation of his appeal, though usually in less dramatic fashion. Still, it was the repeated use of the myth, at august and important occasions that cemented the myth's continuation. If perhaps, in the earlier decades of the century, the Batswana who used the alleged compact with the Queen were cynical in their public discourse, by the 1940s they and all their listeners believed it wholeheartedly. This development should not surprise us, as Hobsbawm has already noted that "inventing traditions. . . is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition."[45]

The real reason for the continuous need to bring back the myth was the constant threat of incorporation into the Union, a fact that hovered over the inhabitants of the Protectorate until the late 1950s. On no less than six occasions between 1910 and 1960, the government of the Union explicitly demanded the transfer of Bechuanaland (and the other two southern African protectorates, Basutoland and Swaziland).[46] In the minds of the Batswana, the prospect of becoming part of the Union was just as obnoxious as the earlier possibility of living under Company rule had been.

Hence, the visit by the Price of Wales to the Protectorate in 1925 proved a time to convey anti-transfer sentiments. The arrival of members of the English monarchy would always prove to be an excellent mythmaking occasion, as Batswana felt that they could communicate directly with the descendants of "the Mother Queen of loving and noble memory"[47] and thus reinvigorate the connection of 1895.

Your welcome visit at once reminds us of how Her Majesty Queen Victoria, whose blessed memory shall never be forgotten by us, embraced us under her Imperial Protection to deliver us from the invasions of neighbouring tribes. It reminds us how, foreseeing on-coming troubles, our three chiefs, namely Bathoen, Sebele, and Khama deemed it prudent to cross the seas unknown to them in order that they might obtain eagerly required protection from a superior and powerful nation....We pray we may remain as a Protectorate as long as the British flag waves.[48]

Although the Union government had made some efforts to incorporate the Protectorates before, it was really in the late 1920s and 1930s that it placed greater pressure on the British government. In 1926, at the Imperial Conference, South African Prime Minister Hertzog got the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Amery, to promise to investigate the issue.[49] Hence, we find that on Amery's subseuqent visit to the Protectorate, in 1927, the reemergence of Bathoen-type overtures made to him directly:

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[45]E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.
[46]See Tshekedi Khama, *Bechuanaland and South Africa*. With an introduction by M. Perham (London: Africa Bureau, 1955), 6; and also R. Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansionism 1908-1948* (London: Macmillan, 1972).
[47]BNA S.4/2/2 Address by the Barolong to the Prince of Wales, 18 June 1925.
[48]Ibid, Address by Ntebogang to Prince of Wales. Practically the same thing is said by Chiefs Linchwe, Sebele II, and Seboko Mokgosi, same file.
[49]Hyam, *Failure of Expansionism*, 105-6.

Your servants humbly showeth unto your Honour, that they became British subjects not through conquest, of wars waged against the Imperial Government, but that by choice they asked the late noble Queen Victoria to protect them from the forces of the then SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC, who were constantly threatening to molest them.[50]

Such overtures, made fairly repeatedly by the Batswana chiefs at public gatherings and private meetings, seem to have impressed Amery, who responded to such overtures by Bakwena Chief Sebele II: "They can rest assured that His Majesty will continue to accord them the privileges granted by Queen Victoria to Chief Sebele I."[51]

Subsequent visits by other notables to the Protectorate resulted in similar forms of address, even by leaders of ethnic groups unrelated to the Bangwato, Bangwaketse, and Bakwena. For instance, a Kalanga chief, Ramokate, pleaded to the High Commissioner in 1931:

My tribe, called the Bakhurutshe, and I are very pleased to see one who is great, and under whom our country the Protectorate is, and who reminds us of the mercy of our grandmother, the Queen, who left us some years ago. Under that flag of England overseas and with that promise to our forefathers we live happily even now. We fully believe that under the British Government there is protection.... May God help his excellency, who is above us, that he be merciful, big-hearted and soft-hearted like the Queen.[52]

In the early 1930s the pressure placed on Britain by the South Africans increased, particularly after the Great Depression made it increasingly difficult for the British to support the territory. Thus, the South Africans, with their economy booming as a result of the gold bonanza of the times, offered to develop the region if it were given to them. It was at this time that incorporation threat loomed its greatest.

Leading the campaign against incorporation was Khama III's youngest son, Tshekedi Khama, who served as Bangwato regent from 1926-52. The young regent, as Hyam has noted, "played a larger part than any other African in anti-transfer publicity."[53] Tshekedi, who investigated every aspect of the protection issue in his role as regent due to several court cases he fought over the division of power between the chiefs and the Protectorate government, was well aware that the Batswana had not asked for protection from the British in 1885.[54] Like practically all the other Batswana of his time, he was completely against his country being incorporated into the Union. When addressing a non-British audience, he gave his reasons for this quite openly—he was opposed to racial discrimination and segregation in South Africa, in addition to the fact that he feared the loss of land and political rights as a result of transfer. Moreover, he felt that the peoples of the Protectorate were better off economically than Africans in the

[50]BNA S. 17/1, f.63, copy of address to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs by Acting Chief Paul Montsioa [1927].
[51]Ibid, f.209 Annex D, speech of Amery at Gaberones [1927].
[52]Bechuanaland Protectorate, *Tour of His Excellency the High Commissioner For South Africa Sir Herbert Stanley, GCMG, in the Bechuanaland Protectorate 17th-31st August, 1931*, 45. Other speeches in same volume along theme are those by Kgari Sechele and Tshekedi Khama.
[53]*Failure of Expansion*, 143.
[54]See, *The Case For Bechuanaland,* (s.1., n.p. *[1946),* Ch.7.

various reserves in South Africa, and hence saw no reason to want to join the Union.[55] But in dealing with the British public, who had some say over his future, Tshekedi was willing, like his predecessors, to play to the emotions and appeal to the British to keep the promises that they had allegedly made to their poor, humble, Batswana allies. Thus on the visit of Prince George to the Protectorate in 1934, he drew up a large banner, with a message inscribed over the replica of a lion kaross, reading:

We rejoice to see in our midst the Great Grandson of our never-to-be-forgotten mother, Queen Victoria, as this is evidence of the King's mindfulness even of a small people. May the loyal remembrances and unswerving devotion of Khama's widow and people be conveyed to our King.[56]

Tshekedi understood and used both aspects of the protection myth in his extensive propaganda attempts through the British press. In 1885, Warren had acted "to protect the people from the in-rush into the country of the unruly people from outside the territories whom otherwise the Chiefs might not have had the power to control."[57] Such facts therefore made it highly irregular for the British to now consider transferring the Batswana to the Union:

A protectorate would then appear to have been explained to mean protecting from overflooding of native territories by people from other countries; protection to keep off other civilized Powers from interfering with the territories, and finally the British Government's acceptance of the position of guardianship of the rights of the native people.[58]

Directly comparing the 1895 situation with the contemporary incorporation threat, Tshekedi quoted liberally from the three chiefs:

There is no government that we can trust as we trust that of the Great Queen.

The Queen's government should not throw them away as if they were troublesome children who would not listen to their mother's words.[59]

The upshot of past promises of protection, Tshekedi showed:

If these words were a sufficient reason to dissuade the Queen to hand over to the Bechuanaland Protectorate to the control of the Chartered Company against their wish, it is even today a stronger argument against incorporation in view of the apparent cleavage between the British Government and the Union Government....if such connections are annulled by severance of the Bechuana tribes

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[55]Tshekedi Khama, "The Protectorates: A Reply to the Propaganda for the Incorporation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Within the Union," *South African Outlook* 65 (May 1935): 92-5.
[56]BNA BTAdmin, see drawing of banner, "To H.R.H. The Prince George, KG, etc.," dated 20 March 1934. Tshekedi's address to the Prince, paraphrased in Bulawayo Chronicle, 24 March 1934, reads: "these visits of great-grandsons of the never-to-be-forgotten Queen Victoria were greatly appreciated....Tshekedi asked that the arrangements made by Chief Khama and other chiefs with Queen Victoria for the protection of British rule should be prolonged. In fact, several native chiefs made this request to the Prince."
[57]Idem, *A Statement to the British Parliament and People* (London: Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 1935), 6.
[58]*Ibid*, 7.
[59]*Ibid*, 11.

from the British people and by handing these tribes over to the Government of the Union against their wish, then one can reasonably say our protection by the Great King would be lost and the tribes be left without protection which was the essence of the agreement between the Queen of England and themselves.[60]

By the time of the outbreak of World War II, the Protectorate was still under British control, and the incorporation issue died out as the fight versus the Nazis took precedence. In this atmosphere, even the Union government agreed that "the question of transfer should be placed in abeyance."[61] As a result, the mythology of protection, which had been used so heavily since 1926, was dropped. Whereas Tshekedi and all manner of other Tswana leaders had appealed to the myth previously,[62] during the war the old mantra of "loyalty" was trotted out endlessly in public occasions. So as a stream of British officials visited the Protectorate to ensure that the country was being mobilized for the war effort, not once did a single Tswana chief raise the protection issue in a public speech, as far as can be determined.[63]

After World War II, with the rise to power of the Nationalist Party in South Africa, few British politicians seriously considered that transfer could take place. However, despite the fact that British were no longer interested, the Nationalist leaders continued to agitate for it, often in a belligerent manner. In this light they also turned their League of Nations Mandate, Namibia, into a de facto province of South Africa. Backing up such official actions was the rhetoric of the white settler farmers in the Protectorates, who even though small in number were vocal and had equal access to officials.[64]

Likewise the visit to the Protectorate of the Royal family in April 1947 served as a perfect occasion in which to affirm loyalty and to protest against potential incorporation. The High Commissioner, whose speech in Setswana was read to a massive throng that came to greet the royals at Lobatse, itself managed to link the royal party, Queen Victoria, the Three Kings, and protection together within the space of several sentences. But the highlight of the visit, from a Tswana standpoint, was the speech of Bathoen II, the grandson of one of the original three Chiefs. Wearing the ceremonial dress of the Royal Horse Guards, and carrying a sword of such size that practically threatened to cause him to fall over, Bathoen addressed to the King on behalf of the Batswana people, assembled 25,000 strong for the occasion:

We, the peoples of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, together with our Chiefs, express our gratification at Your Majesty's presence in our country....Your great-grandmother, the noble Queen Victoria,

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[60] *Ibid*, 12.
[61] Hyam, *Failure of Expansionism*, 163.
[62] See for instance, BNA S. 423/4 various speeches enclosed in Reilly to Priestman 19 June 1935, dealing with tour of the Protectorate by the High Commissioner Sir Henry Clark.
[63] See BNA S. 198/5-15, which has copious documentation of speeches delivered from 1941-5.
[64] See Hyam, *Failure of Expansionism*, Ch. 8; Khama, *Bechuanaland and South Africa*.

whose memory is ever held in affectionate esteem by us. It was on that occasion that our fathers received the great benefit of the protection of the British Crown which we continue to enjoy in full.[65]

Bathoen's uniform, which Khama III had purchased in 1895 from a theatrical company in London, added to the occasion. Just as Bathoen I had added the rings to the inventory of gifts allegedly granted them by the Queen, now his grandson added military uniforms. After the formal ceremonies were over, Bathoen and Tshekedi had a chance to chat with their visitors: "After tea the King talked to the Chiefs for about 10 minutes. I heard him ask Tshekedi where he got his uniform and Tshekedi trotted out the old story about Queen Victoria and Chief Khama."[66] Following the episode, fiction became fact, as even the official account of the King's journey notes that Bathoen's uniform "had been bestowed upon his grandfather by Queen Victoria in 1895."[67]

By the end of the 1950s the hysteria over incorporation faded as the spirit of decolonization arose, and the British government distanced itself from the Nationalist party in South Africa. By the time Harold Macmillan visited southern Africa in 1960 to deliver his "winds of change" addresses, it was clear that incorporation would never happen. As he noted in Francistown during his one hour visit to the Protectorate:

The United Kingdom will continue to afford assistance and protection to Bechuanaland....the obligation that we assumed when the Bechuanaland Protectorate came into existence is one that we shall scrupulously fulfill. There is no doubt about that.[68]

With the apparent end of the incorporation threat, one would have thought that once and for all the protection myth would have died out with it. Constant reiteration, though, had diffused the myth across the Protectorate, and the old idea came to serve new purposes, which served the contending needs of neocolonialism and nationalism.

Nationalism, Neocolonialism and the Renewal of the Myth, 1953-66

British officials, particularly after 1908, rarely attempted to use the mythology of protection in order to cement their hegemony over the Batswana. In fact, they had become mere hearers of the myth. All this changed in the 1950s as decolonization proceeded apace, and the British sought to tie her long-time subjects to her by incorporating Botswana into the Commonwealth, a tie which would hopefully keep Botswana pro-western in the era of the Cold War. At the very same time the British were proceeding with their neocolonial strategems, a fully-fledged nationalism emerged in the Protectorate. Several avowedly nationalist political parties were formed, and the view that the peoples of the Protectorate

[65]BNA S. 109/2 Address to King by Bathoen, draft. The myth is also propagated in similar language in *Naledi Ya Batswana Souvenir Brochure, Bechuanaland Royal Visit*, n.d.
[66]Ibid, Sillery to Baring 24 April 1947.
[67]D. Morrah, *The Royal Family in Africa*. Foreword by J.C. Smuts (London: Hutchinson, 1947, 121, and see the uniforms in the photo, p76. On the origins of these uniforms, and on the role of military dress in Tswana colonial pageantry, see A. Makin, *Across the Kalahari Desert* (London: Arrowsmith, 1930), Ch. 22, "A Comic Opera Army."
[68]*Address of Welcome To and Reply By the Right Honourable Harold Macmillan M.P. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom...on the occasion of his visit to Francistown, Bechuanaland Protectorate 27th January*, (Mafeking: Government Printer, 1960), 18.

formed a cohesive country called "Botswana" became dominant among the politically active. Practically all the new activists eschewed tribalism, and sought to build up support from across the nation.[69] Nationalists, like the British, also appealed to the mythology of protection in order to garner support.

There is no room to explore the various machinations engaged in by the British during their last decade in control of the Protectorate. In short, they backed a group of moderates led by Seretse Khama, the grandson of Khama III. Seretse and his Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP) essentially became the protegés of the British, while more radical nationalists were placed under surveillance and had their activities hampered in a number of subtle ways.[70] A second thing that the British did was to portray themselves as benevolent colonizers who deserved to be closely associated with in the future. To this end it established an information department, while also distancing itself from South Africa by ending racial segregation for the first time. Protection mythology served both purposes well. Any focus on the role of Khama III served to improve the image of Seretse Khama, whose radical opponents had no comparable tradition of statesmanship in their families' backgrounds to call upon. Moreover, the story about the British saving the Batswana from the Boers through the mediation of Queen Victoria only served to accentuate the difference between England and Verwoerd's Afrikaner regime.

The first instance of the desire of the British to renew their use of the myth was in 1953, when Queen Elizabeth was crowned as the new English monarch. This coronation occurred at a time when British administration had reached a nadir among the Bamangwato, the Protectorate's largest population group and the residents of southern Africa's largest reserve. Tensions there from 1951-3 as a result of the banning of Seretse Khama from the chieftaincy, as well as forcing Tshekedi Khama out of the regency, had led to a series of boycotted meetings and agitation, all of which made the Bangwato reserve troublesome for the British for the first time in decades. Moreover, continued political agitation threatened to upset the introduction of elected local councils and other British attempts to reorganize the region.

Hence, British officials used the Queen's coronation as an attempt to win back loyalty in the region, especially from the younger men of the area who were perhaps less wedded to tradition. In all, the Protectorate government spent £1,000 on Coronation celebrations in 1953 in the Bangwato Reserve, while spending no more than £100 in any other reserve.[71] The speeches made on this occasion do not appear to have survived. However, it is instructive that the press release sent out by the government for the occasion made every attempt to link Elizabeth to Victoria:

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[69] See A. Murray, H. Nengwenkhulu, and J. Ramsay, "The Formation of Political Parties," in F. Morton and J. Ramsay, eds., *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman, 1987), 172-86, and *Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho*.

[70] Monthly "Tergos" Reports of the Special Branch of the Police, located in the BNA Divisional Commissioner files, make this evident.

[71] BNA S. 464/7. The only extant speech, in the same file, was made by Bathoen II, in Kanye, and contains all the themes pursued earlier under the anti-incorporation guise: "Many events...made it necessary for the Chiefs Sebele, Khama, and Bathoen to visit Queen Victoria in 1895, whose name is still remembered by us all....We have since enjoyed British protection and still continue to enjoy it."

On the great and solemn occasion of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II we should look to the past as well as to the future. It was in the time of another Queen, affectionately known in the Protectorate as "Mosadiyane" (Queen Victoria) that the country of the Bechuana first came under British protection....It is proper that at this time all of us should pledge ourselves to strive for the common good, and so make each our own small contribution to the greatness of another "Mosadiyane."[72]

This reemphasis on the British Crown as a result of the accession of Queen Elizabeth continued thereafter until Britain granted independence to Botswana in 1966. The symbol of the new Mmamosadinyane, presumably as "warm and confident" and motherly as her ancestor, was a perfect way to keep nationalism in check and to better regulate politics in the Protectorate:

I think the Crown is a fitting symbol of the family feeling that we all of us wish to have in a happy community.... But the Crown is a family symbol not only within the family of Bechuanaland but also between my country and you and the rest of the Commonwealth; it is the bond of our past association and the ground of our future success.[73]

But government spokesmen and propagandists did not have to work hard to promote the old myths about Queen Victoria, even though they trotted them out regularly in the run-up to independence. Batswana nationalists themselves were heavily involved in working with the government to celebrate their forefathers' dealings with her. In 1957 Bathoen II, at the Joint Advisory Council, declared that public holidays like Whit Monday and Arbor Day were "meaningless", proposed that "this Protectorate, like other countries, should have public holidays expressive of some events or in honour of famous men of the Territory."[74] After Bathoen proposed holidays in honor of Khama III and the day of the founding of the Protectorate, he was seconded by the highly-decorated Ngwato war veteran Molwa Sekgoma:

Chief Bathoen has just mentioned a great man like Khama. I would go further and say that they should be combined—Chief Khama, Chief Sebele and Chief Bathoen—who are really the founders of this Protectorate. I think we have to remember these great men who have given us this Protectorate.[75]

British officials were keen to sanction the idea. The Resident Commissioner quickly went ahead and promulgated a new public holiday named "Protectorate Day" by fiat. This holiday, strangely enough fell on the 30th of September, in recognition of the day in 1885 when the British government decided to split the Batswana under its control into two separate colonies. Thus, the Batswana of modern-day North-West Province of South Africa were placed under the administration of the Cape Colony, while the Batswana of modern-day Botswana became the Bechuanaland Protectorate. By analogy, then, one could say this was equivalent to Germany celebrating the day in which East Germany was separated

[72]Ibid, Resident Commissioner to General Manager Bantu Press, 19 May 1953.
[73]Bechuanaland Protectorate. *Addresses of Welcome to and Reply by His Excellency the High Commissioner Sir John Maud, GCB, CBE on the occassion of His Excellency's visit to Lobatsi, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 3rd February 1959* (Mafeking: Government Printer, 1959), 23.
[74]*Minutes of the Sixth Session of the Joint Advisory Council... Mafeking, 27th & 28th February 1957*, 11.
[75]Ibid., 12.

from West Germany, and it certainly bore no relationship to the day when the Protectorate was actually declared, which was January 27th 1885.

So, on September 30 1958, the Batswana celebrated the day on which they were split into two groups by their protectors. He, at least, viewed the event as a success:

I wish to say that this year for the first time we celebrated a day, 30th September, as a great day. I feel we should make arrangements now that the Bechuanaland Protectorate is about to celebrate its 75th Anniversary as a Protectorate....that day will be celebrated if it is agreed upon by the people of this Protectorate.[76]

Each year thereafter the new holiday went from strength to strength. In 1959 Bathoen and other chiefs sponsored elaborate ceremonies in which they appeared on horseback and delivered speeches, while the government-subsidized press gave extensive coverage, including photographs and editorials espousing the greatness of the day and the wisdom of the Three Kings.[77] In Kanye, where the event was photographed, Bathoen I was greeted by large numbers of horsemen and ululating women, following which Bathoen gave a long address "speaking about the history of the British Bechuanaland Protectorate in Setswana" to the crowd.[78]

Further north in Serowe a large celebration was organised by L.D. Raditladi, the Tswana language's most eminent living author and the founder of the Protectorate's first (though short-lived) nationalist party. Records indicate that the program for the day included horse-racing, athletics, fireworks, and feasting. Raditladi, who relied heavily on donations from traders for the event, was keen to make non-racialism the keystone of the event. According to undercover policemen, "competition was bi-racial in fact as well as in theory." The culmination of the day's festivities was the European vs. Non-European tug-of-war, which was won by the latter group "possibly because they had done no work all day."[79]

Here then was the success of the Protection myth, believed by both colonizer and colonized alike. The colonized revering their ancestors who had kept them from the grips of South African rule, while the colonizers basked in the glow of interracial cooperation, enjoying the clear distinction between themselves and the apartheid regime.

Meanwhile Protectorate Day clearly began to assume importance in nationalist circles, as evidenced by the words of one of the country's future presidents:

Bechuanaland Protectorate Day" is of much greater significance than we think it is, for it is on this day, September 30, the Batswana remember how our great chiefs--Khama, Sebele, and Bathoen went to London in 1895...and thus preserved the integrity of the country which is now our heritage....

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[76]Minutes of the Eighth Session of the Joint Advisory Council...3rd and 4th November 1958, 15, remarks of Bathoen.
[77]See *Naledi Ya Batswana*, October 17 and 24 1959.
[78] See photographs of the event in K. Schlosser, *At the Edge of the Kalahari: Colour Photographs of Tswana Chiefdoms and Hereros in Exile* (Kiel: Museum fur Volkerkunde der Universitat Kiel, 2001), 26.
[79]BNA Div Comm North 9/2, Ngwato District Tergos Report for September 1960.

Because of the wise action of the three chiefs, we are able to boast of being Batswana nation in Botswana.... I wish to continue to celebrate the "B.P. Day" even after independence. That will be a way of paying homage to our great ancestors. Protection was theirs; independence will be our achievement.[80]

Can it be any wonder then, that as the days of colonial rule neared an end, September 30th was chosen as the day of independence for the new nation of Botswana?

Independence Day was a grand occasion with the British government, in its press release for visiting reporters, explaining the origins of the Protectorate thus: "In the last century trouble began to break out between the Batswana and the Boers across the border of the Transvaal. The Batswana appealed to Britain for protection."[81] Meanwhile, another government publication had photos of Khama III, Sebele I, Bathoen I, Queen Victoria, and Queen Elizabeth side by side, with a caption underneath describing the Three Kings as "our nation's founders," before describing their legendary journey to England.[82]

On the evening of the celebrations, festivities were organized in the stadium of the new capital, Gaborone. The culmination of the nights events, as the hour of independence approached, were addresses by Queen Elizabeth (represented in proxy by Princess Marina) and by the new President, Sir Seretse Khama.

If the Queen herself was ignorant of the myth of protection, her canned address nevertheless played on the neocolonialist ethic of the time: "your country first became associated with Great Britain some eighty-one years ago, when it came under the protection of the British Crown....It is with special pleasure that I welcome you into the Commonwealth of Nations."[83] Seretse himself, who had been knighted just days before, and thus could now refer to himself as "Sir", showed that he was in the proper spirit, alluding in full to the national myth as the clock ushered in the new era of an independent Botswana:

we have been associated with Great Britain for over 81 years and, proud though we may be of our newly achieved independence, in almost every one of us there will remain a feeling of nostalgia that the former, more intimate link, has now been severed. From time when (sic), in 1885, we came under the protection of the Crown; and when in 1894 (sic) as a result of the visit of Chiefs Khama, Bathoen and Sebele to see Queen Victoria our protection was more firmly assured, there has existed in this country a feeling of deep attachment and loyalty to the Crown... As grown children, we now go out into the world...within the framework of the Commonwealth.[84]

The next major celebration was the Independence Day dance, hosted by the new Mayor of Gaborone, J.D. Jones, a veteran LMS minister. After more speeches, Jones first danced with Princess Marina,

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[80]Letter from F.G. Mogae, London, to *Kutlwano* 4, 8 (1964): 14.
[81]"Bechuanaland Fact Sheet", printed May 1966, 2.
[82]*Kutlwano Independence Edition* No 10 (September 1966), n.p.
[83]*Botswana Daily News*, September 30 1966.
[84]Ibid.

Seretse then danced with Marina, though apparently Seretse did not dance with Jones.[85] It was the old threesome again, the Queen, the Khama royal, and the LMS, while the evil Boers lurked disapprovingly only a couple of miles away across the border. Nothing, it seemed, had fundamentally changed since 1885.

Conclusion

In the fifty years since independence the national myth has gone from strength to strength. Botswana's most influential history text, *A Primary History of Botswana*,[86] has now so entrenched the importance of the Boer threat in 1885 and the promise made to the Three Chiefs by Victoria in 1895 that it seems unlikely that they will ever be displaced as the key historical events in the national mind. Government and official tourist web sites continue to foreground these events in their "history" pages, as does the Wikipedia "History of Botswana" page. The national mythology is entrenched in the speeches of its most famous President, Seretse Khama,[87] and in the plots of its most famous novelist, Bessie Head.[88] Massive sculptures of the Three Chiefs, meanwhile, were chosen as the national monument in 2005. While most academic studies of Botswana's history do not provide overt support for the national mythology, it would appear that they are incapable of supplanting it.

As has been shown, the national mythology was created and used by multiple actors over multiple decades in multiple political disputes. Over the course of time it came to be acceptable to the British colonizers and their Batswana subjects, and finally to the citizens of modern Botswana. This strange and long-lasting consensus should not distract historians, in our view, from seeking to create a more factually accurate nationalist narrative.

[85]Ibid, October 1 1966.
[86]R. Gardner, *A Primary History of Botswana*. Foreward by Sir Seretse Khama (Cape Town: Longmans, 1972), Chs. 16, 19, 20.
[87] G. Carter and P. Morgan, eds., *From the Frontline: Speeches of Sir Seretse Khama* (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1980), xvi.
[88] B. Head*, A Bewitched Crossroads: An African Saga* (Johannesburg: A.D. Donker, 1984), 90-4.